

Nail Bind

If your horse appears to be lame after being shod, it could be due to nail bind, where a nail holding the shoe on has been driven in too close to the sensitive parts of your horse's foot.



How does it happen?

Horse shoes generally have to be nailed onto the foot. The nails used are designed to bend so that, although they enter the foot close to the white line (between the hoof wall and sole), the bend takes the nail away from the sensitive parts of the foot and allows it to exit further up the hoof wall. Despite the skill of the farrier there will be occasions when a nail is inserted which creates pressure on the deeper layers of the hoof wall.



Why does this happen?

In most instances this will be an unfortunate coincidence. In others it may be because the farrier is working under difficult circumstances. Perhaps your horse is unhappy being shod and pulling the foot away during nailing of the shoe. This could be down to behavioural issues or your horse may be lame on another leg and too sore to lift the foot for long. The hoof wall might be excessively broken due to poor horn quality or perhaps the last shoe was ripped off. These circumstances may make it hard for the farrier to find a place to put the new nail that he or she is truly happy with and has to nail higher than normal.

What are the signs?

In some instances your horse will be lame immediately and the farrier will refit the shoe. More usually, lameness is noticed in the days following your horse being shod, perhaps up to 8 or 9 days later. The foot may seem hot and an increased digital pulse may be detectable. When the vet or farrier examines the foot there will usually be pain using hoof testers or when tapping one nail or one area of the hoof wall.

An early diagnosis will minimise the damage, so give your vet a call if you suspect nail bind.

What is the treatment?

An early diagnosis will minimise the damage, so give your vet a call if you suspect nail bind. The lameness will only resolve if the nail or shoe is removed and the inflammation is reduced. Your vet may also prescribe non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs to reduce the inflammation and discomfort more quickly. Tubbing or poulticing the foot might be recommended.

Lameness will normally resolve quickly and it may disappear once the offending nail is removed. Sometimes it might take a few days for everything to settle down and for your horse to be more comfortable.

Occasionally, if the nail has allowed penetration a little deeper into the sensitive tissues of the foot, infection may have been introduced and this will require an area of horn to be exposed so that pus can be released. Your vet will be able to advise you if this is the case.



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How can it be prevented?

In many instances, nail bind is an unlucky accident and can't be prevented. However, if your horse is difficult or frightened when being shod, it would be reasonable to use sedation to make the farrier's job easier. Pain relief at the time of shoeing is a good idea if your horse struggles with pain. Feed additives or supplements may be helpful if the hoof horn is brittle and breaks easily. Have a chat with your vet about all of these options and they will be happy to advise.



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